

## Newar Marriage Customs

(Continued.)

—Purna Harsha Bajracharya

Early next morning the father in law takes the bride in a doli in a procession through the main streets preceded by the musicians, bringing her his house. At this moment the bridegroom's mother waits for her at the main gate of the house, which has been decorated with many auspicious ceremonial objects. As soon as the bride arrives and is taken out of the doli or automobile her mother in law welcomes her with traditional rites (**losokoso yaye**). The concluding ceremony takes place when the bridegroom's mother cleans the bride's feet with holy water, gives her a key, and takes her into the house.

Once in the house, the bride is placed near the altar for the sacred fire (*yajna-sala*). The bridegroom sits to the right and the **lami** to the left of the bride. Traditional rites are performed by the priest. Relatives and guests who witness the ceremony often laugh at the bridegroom. At the end of the ceremony the **lami** puts ten betel nuts into the hands of the bride who offers them to the family deity and then presents ten betel nuts to each member of the family in turn. During the distribution of the nuts the **lami** introduces the members of the family to the bride. Lastly the bride gets up and stands in front of the bridegroom. The **lami** puts ten betel nuts into the hands of the bride, which she gives to the bridegroom and bows, touching his foot with her head to show her humble submiss-

ion to him. This is the most important ceremony of the marriage, since it is the time when the bridegroom is recognized as husband and the bride as wife. This is called **honkegu**.

Following this ceremony comes the special matrimonial feast given to the new couple. A large round bronze plate (*thaye bhoo*), furnished with a number of different varieties of foods, is placed in front of them. The bridegroom and the bride eat together from the same plate, the only time they would eat together during their married life. This ceremony (*thaya bhoo nake*) therefore provides an interesting spectacle for the gathering.

In the evening a big feast (*pasta bhoje*) is held to which only the relative and friends of the bridegroom and the bridegroom's family are invited. All kinds of food except curds, wine, and sweets may be served by any of the guests. A son-in-law of the bridegroom's family serves curds; the bridegroom's mother assisted by the groom's maternal aunt serves wine; the bridegroom himself, usually assisted his maternal uncle, follows his mother, and serves sweets. Then the bridegroom's father makes apologies for the meagerness of the fare provided. At this time the bride is placed along with the **lami** where all the guests can see her as they depart to their houses.

On the following day, the bridegroom, the bride, and the bridegroom's mother and her



विवाहमा दुलहा र दुलहीले थायेभु खाएको  
The bridegroom and the bride eating the dinner Thayebhu



विवाहमा दुलहीलाई गोडघुषा दिएको  
The bride being presented with gift

near relatives take their first meal of rice together. This act (niksha Bhoje) signifies that the bride has permission to dine with the family.

On the morning of the fourth day the priest comes to worship at the altar. The bride is brought and is seated in front of it. Various hair dressing articles and religious objects are sent from the girl's family for the bride. The bridegroom stands by the side of his wife, while the priest reads from the holy book and teaches the bridegroom how to dress her hair. Following the priest's instructions, the groom combs her hair dividing it into five plaits, and putting various kinds of oil on her hair. This is called **san pyakegu**. Many persons group there to witness it and when the husband fails to dress her hair properly he is taunted by the spectators with laughs and sometimes with whistles and jeers. When all these things are finished the bride is taken to the family deity, which the bride worships while the bridegroom puts a red **tika** (a vermillion dot) on her forehead. This act (wonjala) makes a second very important stage of marriage, because as soon as the bridegroom puts that **tika** on the bride's forehead in front of their family deity, she obtains permission to see and worship her husband's family deity.

In the evening a festival is held on which every one plays practical jokes and enjoys himself. Various food stuffs may be disguised as sweets and water served instead of liquor. The cooks come in varied disguises to sing and dance before the guests. After all this is a real feast (pakna pooja bhoje) is given to all the guests.

On the same evening the bride's father, along with a group of his friends, pays a visit to his daughter. He takes with him different kinds of presents including clothes, fruits, sweets, etc. which he gives to his daughter. Other guests give her money. This is called **khwaso** onegu.

The bridegroom's family entertains them with wine, sweets, dried fruits, and betel leaves. After the reception, the bride returns to her former home with her father.

An invitation from the bride's party is sent to the bridegroom, through an attendant. The bridegroom goes to his wife's house with a priest taking with him a pod of musk. All the relatives and other guests will be waiting there to receive the new bridegroom. As soon as he arrives the new couple is given a special seat. The priest sits to the right of the bridegroom and the **lami** to the left of the bride. The **lami** puts ten betel nuts into the hands of the bridegroom which he offers to the family deity. Then he distributes ten betel nuts to each of the family members. While this is going on the priest displays the pod of musk in front of the couple to signify that the bridegroom has business establishment in Tibet (autonomous region of the Peoples Republic of China) and deals in musk (a symbol of wealth).

After the betel nuts have been distributed, a feast is given to the bridegroom's party. During the feast the cooks play practical jokes of many kinds. Sometimes something is thrust under their seats to produce amusing, if embarrassing, noises. Sometimes the cooks string pieces of meat and other foodstuffs together so that when the bridegroom attempts to take a piece, the entire mass comes with us, making the spectators laugh. Thus this evening the bridegroom party specially the bridegroom have to be very careful in accepting food. At the end of the meal the marriage party are served with betel leaves and dried fruits, after which the party goes back with the bride. This is called (duchayekegu), signifying that from that day forth the bridegroom is free to go to his father in law's house. Thus the marriage ceremony concludes on the fourth day and from this evening on the husband and wife are free [to pursue their own way.

